

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-20 NSC-10 PM-07 CIAE-00 INR-10

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DRC-01 /108 W

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R 041655Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9530

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO USNMR SHAPE

USCINCEUR

CHMAAG NETHERLANDS

COMMERCE DEPARTMENT

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MASS, BEXP, BE

SUBJECT: REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT FOR F-104

REF: USNATO 0021

1. I FULLY CONCUR AS TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BENELUX
CHOICE OF REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT FOR F-104S AND
STRONGLY SUPPORT USNATO'S RECOMMENDATION FOR USG ACTION
ON BEHALF OF US ENTRANTS IN REPLACEMENT COMPETITION.

2. FRENCH HAVE PRIMARY ADVANTAGE OF SUPERFICIALLY MORE
ATTRACTIVE ECONOMIC COMPENSATION OFFER BUT ARE ALSO
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BENEFITING FROM DE FACTO "CHOSEN INSTRUMENT" APPROACH.

AS REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, NON-MILITARY FRENCH OFFICIALS ARE IMPLYING TO BELGIANS THAT FRENCH AIR FORCE WILL EVENTUALLY PURCHASE SUPER F-1. (THEY ALREADY HAVE COMMITMENT TO F-1.) THUS CHOICE BY USAF OF ONE OF US CANDIDATES WOULD BE DESIRABLE. HOWEVER, I UNDERSTAND THAT POSSIBLE USG DECISION TO BUY ANY OF THREE US AIRCRAFT IN F-104 REPLACEMENT COMPETITION MAY BE TOO FAR IN FUTURE TO INFLUENCE ONGOING BENELUX DECISION PROCESS. THEREFORE, SOME FORM OF USG GUARANTEE OF LIFE-CYCLE LOGISTICS SUPPORT (PARA 2 A OF REFTEL AND PREVIOUS) ASSUMES GREAT IMPORTANCE. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY MIGHT LIE IN USG CHOICE OF FOLLOW-ON AIRCRAFT FOR FUTURE MAP AIRCRAFT TO REPLACE F-5 SERIES. COULD USG CONSIDER TENTATIVE COMMITMENT TO USE AIRCRAFT CHOSEN BY BENELUX AS FUTURE MAP AIRCRAFT REPLACEMENT?

3. THE USE OF US AIRCRAFT BY SOME 550 BELGIAN PILOTS HAS BEEN AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN OUR MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH BELGIUM. IN ADDITION TO THE ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE F-104 REPLACEMENT DECISION, I AM VITALLY CONCERNED WITH THE POTENTIAL DECLINE IN THAT RELATIONSHIP, IF NOT ITS COMPLETE REPLACEMENT BY A SIMILAR ONE LIMITED TO THE FRENCH AND EXCLUDING THE US. BEGINNING WITH MAP PROGRAMS AFTER THE WAR, THE BELGIAN AIR FORCE HAS BEEN LARGELY EQUIPPED WITH US AIRCRAFT, ACCOMPANIED BY TRAINING AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS. BELGIAN PURCHASE OF MIRAGES HAVE DILUTED THAT RELATIONSHIP. RECENT BELGIAN DECISION TO BUY FRENCH ALPHA-JET TRAINERS IF FOLLOWED BY PURCHASE OF SUPER F-1 WOULD LEAVE HERCULES C-130 AIRCRAFT AS ONLY SIGNIFICANT US EQUIPMENT INPUT AND CONCOMITANT MATERIAL LINK WITH THE BELGIAN AIR FORCE.

4. I INTEND TO MEET WITH OTHER SENIOR GOB MINISTERS DURING COURSE COMING WEEKS TO DISCUSS THE F-104 REPLACEMENT. IF MY INITIATIVE IS TO BE EFFECTIVE, FURTHER GUIDANCE ON POINTS RAISED BY THIS EMBASSY, USNATO, THE HAGUE, AND OSLO WILL BE DESIRABLE. STRAUSSZ-HUPE

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